

Message Text

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SUBJECT: VIET-NAM RESEARCH REACTOR SECURITY

REF: A) STATE 031164; B) STATE 062177

1. IN RESPONSE TO REF A'S REQUEST, CONGEN NHA TRANG AND APPROPRIATE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES HAVE CAREFULLY REVIEWED THE PHYSICAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE GVN'S RESEARCH REACTOR IN DALAT. WE HAVE REVIEWED THEIR FINDINGS AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE ARRANGEMENTS ARE ADEQUATE FOR THE CURRENT AND FORESEEABLE SITUATION.

2. THE PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS OF THE SITE CAN BE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: (A) THE CENTER IS LOCATED ON AN OPEN HILLTOP APPROXIMATELY THREE MILES FROM THE CENTER OF DALAT CITY. THERE ARE NO BUILDINGS OR RESIDENCES CLOSER THAN FIVE HUNDRED METERS. FENCE CONSISTS OF A DOUBLE BARBED WIRE APRON BUT THE AREA IS NOT ENCLOSED. THE DISTANCE FROM THE BUILDING TO THE FENCE VARIES FROM FIFTY TO PERHAPS TWO HUNDRED METERS. THE GUARD FORCE CONSISTS OF FIFTEEN ARMED GUARDS ON THREE DAILY SHIFTS OF FIVE EACH. (B) THE BUILDING IS A CIRCULAR CONCRETE STRUCTURE WITH LARGE EXPANSES OF GLASS WINDOWS IN THE FRONT AND WALLS ABOUT SIX INCHES THICK
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ELSEWHERE. (C) THE REACTOR'S RADIOACTIVE CORE CONSISTING OF SEVENTY

URANIUM RODS IS RECESSED IN THE GROUND AND SHIELDED BY A CONCRETE INNER PROTECTION EIGHT FEET THICK. THE SHIELD AND CORE COULD NOT BE DESTROYED BY ARTILLERY OR ROCKETS EVEN IF THE BUILDING ITSELF WERE COMPLETELY LEVELED. IF THE CENTER WERE OVERRUN OR OCCUPIED IT WOULD BE THEORETICALLY POSSIBLE FOR AN EXPLOSIVE CHARGE TO BE LOWERED INTO THE CORE WELL BUT THIS PRESUPPOSES THE ATTACKERS HAD THE KNOWLEDGE TO OPERATE CERTAIN EQUIPMENT, WHICH SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY. IF THE CORE WERE EXPLODED, ONE COULD EXPECT RADIOACTIVE WATER AND OTHER DEBRIS WOULD BE DISCHARGED IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA WHICH WOULD CONTAMINATE THE GROUNDS OF THE CENTER WITH RESIDUAL RADIATION FOR SOME TIME, BUT THERE WOULD STILL, IN PROFESSOR LONG'S EXPERT OPINION, BE NEGLIGIBLE DANGER OF RADIATION TO THE POPULATION OF DALAT. (LONG IS IN CHARGE OF THE REACTOR.)

3. GVN SECURITY FORCES IN THE AREA INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING: (A) TUYEN DUC SECTOR HAS FIVE RF BNS LESS TWO COMPANIES IN LAM DONG; 95 PF PLATOONS AND 20,368 PSDF, ALL AT FULL STRENGTH. IN ADDITION THERE ARE THREE COMPANIES OF FIELD POLICE AND THE EQUIVALENT OF THREE ADDITIONAL COMPANIES AT THE NPFF TRAINING CENTER IN DALAT. THE MILITARY ACADEMY STAFF AND CADET CORPS OF APPROXIMATELY FIVE THOUSAND ARE ONE KM FROM THE RESEARCH CENTER. (B) THE REGIONAL FORCES IN TUYEN DUC HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES AGGRESSIVE AND HAVE HELD THE TACTICAL INITIATIVE IN THE AREA FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS.

4. WITH INADEQUATE STAFF TO CONTINUE USEFUL RESEARCH, THE REACTOR HAS SIMPLY BEEN HELD IN A "CARE-TAKER" STATUS. THE ONLY PRESENT FUNCTION OF THE RESEARCH CENTER STAFF CONCERNS THE SECURITY, MAINTENANCE AND PERIODIC (WEEKLY) INSPECTION OF THE VARIOUS SYSTEMS: ELECTRONIC, COOLING, PUMPING, ETC. PROFESSOR LONG EMPHASIZED THAT THE REACTOR HAS NOT BEEN "MOTHHOLED"; IT COULD BEGIN OPERATION IN A MATTER OF HOURS IF A STAFF WERE PRESENT AND A NEED EXISTED. ALL COMPONENTS ARE FUNCTIONAL.

5. THEORETICALLY, OF COURSE, THE CENTER IS VULNERABLE TO ENEMY ATTACK. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO INTELLIGENCE TO SUGGEST ENEMY PREPARATIONS FOR OR INTEREST TO ATTACK DALAT AT THIS TIME. SHOULD THIS SITUATION CHANGE, WE RECOMMEND THAT THE AIR FORCE CONTINGENCY PLAN PREPARED IN 1969 FOR SUCH AN EVENTUALITY BE CONSIDERED FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

WE UNDERSTAND IT ENVISIONED DISMANTLING THE REACTOR, UTILIZING
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A C-130 EQUIPPED WITH HEAVY CEMENT CONTAINERS FOR EACH OF THE SEVENTY RODS IN THE REACTOR. DUE TO THE CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION HERE WHICH PLACES A HIGH PREMIUM ON ALL AVAILABLE VNAF C-130S, AN OUT-OF-COUNTRY USAF C-130 WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE AVAILABLE.

6. WE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SECURITY SITUATION AROUND DALAT AND WILL REPORT ANY CHANGES.
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